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# AGREEMENT ON IMMERSION BEING NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM

PREPARED BY P. H. WELSHIMER

Do you know that church historians, Bible commentators, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, in fact, all denominations, are in full agreements on the ACTION or FORM, as some call it, of NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM?

That's good news. Think of it—there is no difference. No arguments are forthcoming on this subject—all agree. To prove it, read the following:

JOHN CALVIN, a Presbyterian, says: "The word 'baptize' signifies 'to immerse' and it is certain that the right of immersion was observed by the ancient church (Inst. B. 4 C. 15).

DEAN ALFORD, an Episcopalian, says: "Baptism was administered in the daytime by immersion of the whole body (Gr. N.T. Vol. 1, p. 20).

WEISS, a Lutheran, says: "After confessing their sins they went down, man by man, into the water of the Jordan, in order to immerse newborn, a people prepared for the Lord." (Vol. 1, p. 307).

JOHN WESLEY, founder of Methodism, in his comments on Romans 6:4, says: "'Buried with Him', alluding to the ancient practice of baptizing by immersion . . ."

DR. WALL, an Episcopalian, says: "Pouring was the substitute for baptism which Calvin first adopted and his sprinkling was only the substitute of a substitute and was the most scandalous thing ever adopted for baptism."

MACKNIGHT, a Presbyterian commentator, says, "In baptism the baptized person is buried under the water. Christ submitted to be baptized; that is, to be buried under the water."

STOUDZA, a native Greek, says: "The verb 'baptize' has only one meaning. Baptism and immersion are identical."

BRENNER, a Roman Catholic, says: "For 1300 years baptism was an immersion of the person under water."

Kitto's Encyclopedia, The Encyclopedia Americana, Brand's Encyclopedia, Smith's Dictionary, all state that the original action of baptism was by immersion. That is **NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM**.

So, from the above it is clearly shown that there is a full agreement in the action on **NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM**. Paul said, "We are buried with Christ by baptism into death." (Rom. 6:4).

All the above concur in that statement. Therefore, it naturally follows, if all are agreed on **NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM**, why do not all practice **NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM**?

The Edinburg Encyclopedia, in its article on baptism, makes the clear statement that the first law for sprinkling was granted by Pope Stephen II, in A. D. 753, when pouring or sprinkling was permitted only in cases of necessity, and was then known as "clinic" or "sickly" baptism, and was used as a substitute for immersion for persons unable to be taken into the water for baptism.

In the Roman Catholic Council held at Ravenna in 1311, it was declared that from that time henceforth sprinkling or pouring would be accepted in place of immersion, both to well people, as well as those who were ill. It will be noticed this change was not made by Christ or the apostles, but by a council of men.

From the above it is clearly shown that for 13 centuries the entire church practiced **NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM—IMMERSION**. Today 85,000,000 in the Greek Church still practice immersion, for those people speak the language in which the New Testament was written.



23 The Episcopal Church, an offshoot from the Roman Catholic Church, began in 1534. The Presbyterian Church, an offshoot from the Episcopal Church, began about 1541, and the Congregational Church soon after. For 102 years, until the Westminster Assembly in 1643, those churches practiced immersion. The Westminster Assembly of Divines was called together by the Parliament of England in 1643. It was composed of 120 men, 10 peers and 20 commoners, the majority of whom were Presbyterian. John Calvin, the founder of Presbyterianism, having gone over from France to Switzerland, was preaching this new doctrine being practiced by the Roman Catholic Church, of sprinkling instead of immersing the individual. Calvin advocated the change. The Westminster Assembly, which convened on July 1, 1643, took up this question of the change from the **NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM**, immersion, to that of the Roman Catholic Church, sprinkling. A vote was taken to decide whether to continue the New Testament practice or to substitute the Roman Catholic practice. When it came to vote, 24 voted to continue the New Testament practice and 24 voted in favor of sprinkling, the Roman Catholic practice. Dr. Lightfoot was chairman. It was his duty to give the deciding vote. He cast his vote in favor of sprinkling (Edin. Enc. Vol. 3, p. 236).

Now, please take notice, that if Dr. Lightfoot had cast his vote in favor of the New Testament practice for immersion, the entire Presbyterian Church would today be practicing and contending for immersion as strongly as do the churches that now practice it. The church is following the vote of Dr. Lightfoot as over against the teaching of Jesus Christ and the teaching and practice of the apostles. In fact, it was Dr. Lightfoot who, following the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, has given to Protestantism its action of baptism, and he was influenced by the agitation started by John Calvin.

The Roman Catholic, and all the Protestant churches, are in full agreement on **NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM**. They simply part company when the decision is made whether to stand by that baptism, or accept something else as a substitute.

What do you think about it? Which is the better? To follow that which is set forth in the New Testament, or to follow something which has been substituted by men? When on earth, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commands of men."

Which shall we follow—the New Testament teaching, or the uninspired teaching of men?